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Presbyterian Church, Fort  
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

by

J. D. Chambers

Fort Wayne, Indiana

1900

Allen County Public Library  
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## A Brief History of The Third Presbyterian Church.

In giving an account of the origin and the early history of our church, one must be remarkable for what he leaves unsaid, rather than for what he says; since it must be largely made up of personal recollections, tied together with the slender fibre of documentary record which remains from the changes and vicissitudes of time, accident, and carelessness.

It has been a labor of love, of interest, but, also, one of sadness, delving into the past, to unearth the circumstances which brought about the birth of the organization, and led to the erection of the building which we now know as the Third Presbyterian Church of Fort Wayne Indiana. So many who were active in its erection and support, are now no longer among us, are sleeping with their fathers, or have disappeared from among us, to take other positions, that it makes one sad to see how few of those who are now with us were among those who aided in the building



2. Of the present edifice; and we are involuntarily reminded of the account, in the Book of Ezra, at the building of the second temple, though for a somewhat different cause. Very soon after the close of the civil war it became evident to many of the members of the First Presbyterian Church, of which, R. Lowry was then pastor, that a great field for mission work was opening up in that portion of the city then known as the Hamilton fields and the Williams Addition. Very little building had been done south of Hamilton Street east of Calhoun Street, and a great portion west of Calhoun Street was still occupied by the Williams' orchard. Much of that portion now occupied by Brackenridge and Baker Streets was a swamp, and an open stream poured down Baker Street. The then recent building of the Pittsburgh and the Hoback railroads, with the establishment of their shops here, together with other shops of manufacture near, rendered it evident that a large influx of laboring people would soon occupy this portion of the city, and would need the place of worship near.



Early in the spring of 1865, the pastor of the  
First Church one Sabbath morning announc-  
ed that all children, and their parents, re-  
siding in that portion of the city, were  
requested to assemble, at two o'clock, in  
the chapel then standing on the site of  
the Third Presbyterian Church, north east  
corner of Calhoun and Holman streets, pro-  
vided for the bounty of the late Mrs. E. J.  
Hamilton, and others, to organize a Miss-  
ion Sunday school, to be held in the after-  
noon. This frame chapel was afterward  
moved to the lot across the street, where  
the new street car barn now stand, and  
was purchased by the Episcopalians.  
The sessions of the Sunday school of the  
First Presbyterian church were then held  
during the winter months in the afternoon,  
and during the summer months in the  
morning.

The school thus organized, was the nucleus of  
the Third Presbyterian church, though the  
church proper was not organized until De-  
cember 1867. When the agitation regarding the  
establishment of a mission Sunday school





4. was begun. The late Hon. Jesse L. Williams, being in the spring of 1865 at a meeting of General Assembly at Cincinnati, met the late Rev. Dr. Nathan S. Smith there, and persuaded him to come to Fort Hayes to engage in city missionary work, which was just the kind of work in which he delighted.

He came on and began work, organizing some mission schools in different parts of the city. There were what were known as Evans' Chapel on Hill St., Hanna Mission on East Lewis St., South Lafayette St. mission, Beavre's Chapel, out at what was then Beavre's Mills near the Broadway river bridge, The Third St. Chapel, in Bloomingdale, and the Third Presbyterian school. This is the one that most interests us now. It was organized with

the late James B. McDonald superintendent, and Mr. Lowry, son of the pastor of the First church as assistant. Many of the members of the First church volunteered, or were induced to take places, as teachers, and the school was a flourishing one. In the spring of 1867 it was decided to establish a church organization there, and steps were taken to effect such organization. Dr. Nathan S. Smith

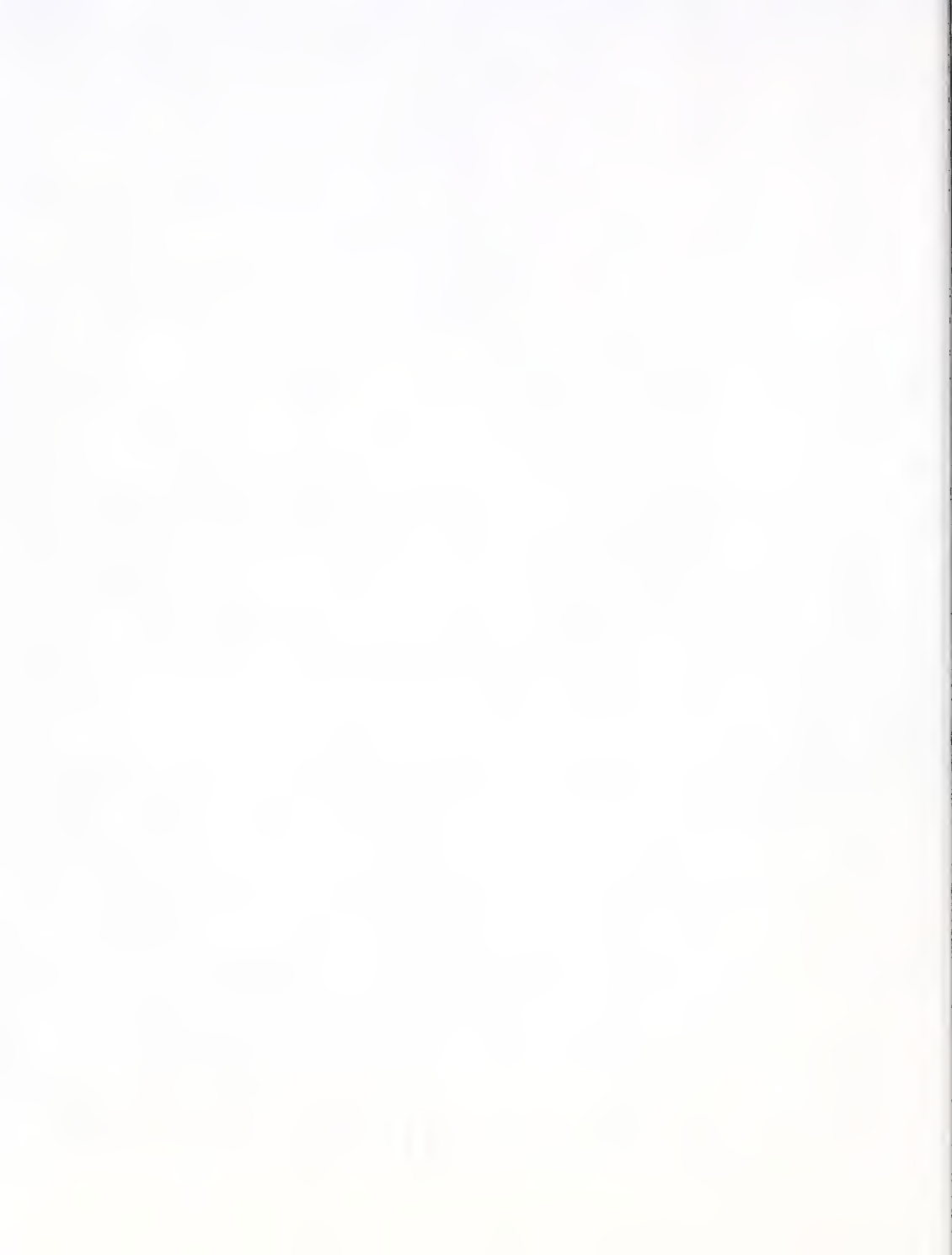




5. was induced to take charge of the organization and become the pastor. In order that you may know how the finances were taken care of at that time, I shall quote you a copy of a doc ment, which I unearthed from the heap that had escaped the ravages of time.

It was headed "Copy," and no doubt, the original paper was held by the trustees of the First Church. It reads as follows: "If a suitable minister can be procured to occupy the new field, preaching regularly in the Chapel on the Sabbath, I pledge, for the ensuing year, the sum of \$300.00 payable quarterly, provided that \$1200.00 shall be raised from all sources, on his salary."

This was dated March 1867 and was signed J. L. Williams. — To this was appended a subscription list, pledging to pay certain amounts, by various members of the First Church, and, ultimately bringing the amount up to the required \$1200.00. This paper had been folded in three folds, and, unfortunately for our complete satisfaction, the lower fold, containing the names of all the subscribers, had



6 Two, is missing. We therefore are unable to give the names of the other benefactors, and justice to all, requires us withhold the name of the two heading the list below Mr. William. The church was not formally organized until, several months later, but the Sunday school was kept in active operation, and the work vigorously prosecuted. Elder Jas. B. McDonald, and a son of the pastor of the first church taking charge of the work, and the members of the first church engaging as teachers.

The first official sessional record of the new church that we have is dated December 3<sup>d</sup> 1867, when thirty-four persons were received into the Third Presbyterian Church twenty of whom came out of the First to form the new church. The pastor was the Rev. Dr. Nathan S. Smith, who had come from Southern Ohio to engage in city missionary work here.

Of that original thirty-four members, two remain with us yet - Mrs. Christina Dume, and Mrs. Leabilla A. Diffenderfer. It would be peculiarly interesting to give the names of the



7 Chartin members, and the names of those come in in succession years, but our time is brief, and we must follow the church, rather than the individual members. Suffice it to say that nine of the twenty soon returned to the mother church; but others came to take their place, and, in the spring of 1869, the cornerstone of the then new church was laid. The late John Cochrane was the contractor and builder. Only the rear portion was completed the first year, and, for many months the Sabbath school was held in what are now our church parlors; rough boards being laid on stringers for seats. The prayer-meeting room, or as it was originally intended and used, the Sabbath-school room above, was finally finished and service conducted there for some months until the audience room was completed. It was not then, as now, a square room, but included what is now the pastor's study, and we entered by what is now the study door, while a small room, where now is the door, was partitioned off for a library room for the Sunday school. It was seated with long, solid benches,





every third one of which had a revolving back, so as to throw seats together for class use in Sabbath school.

The audience room was not finished until the following year, or in 1870 and soon then, was not ready for occupancy. The walls were calcimined a dull blue or green color, and remained unaltered nearly ten years. The place where the choir now is was seated with pews, just as the opposite side is now, and there were no gas jets for the benefit of the pulpit or choir. After a few years some of the seats were removed, making room for an organ, the floor was raised one step, and the back lights were added for pulpit and choir. Some years later the remaining seats were removed, and the platform raised another step, but not until about 1884 was the platform raised in with the pulpit platform. The space enlarged to accommodate a piano, and the side lights added.

In the spring of 1873 the Rev Dr. Smith resigned his pastorate and returned to Ohio, and the Rev. John Woods became a stated supply remaining only one year. The church had been growing steadily in membership & strength.



7 Under Dr. Smith, The Sabbath school was large and flourishing, and the prospects for the future bright. At the expiration of Rev. Wood's year, the church was without regular pastor until the beginning of 1875, when the Rev. Harlan G. Mendenhall, a student at the Northwestern Theological Seminary, Allegheny, came, and was called to the pastorate. He was ordained and installed May 5<sup>th</sup> 1875. The church had been at this time several months without a pastor, and when he came it took on instant new life, and began to increase. Thirty were added to the membership the first year. Many of us will remember the cottage prayer meetings, and the temperance meetings, he inaugurated, and our church can claim the honor unchallenged, of beginning, under him, and perpetuating, the temperance movement in York Haven. In the winter of severity - severity - shown, he made a visit to Pittsburgh, Allegheny, and Philadelphia, and on this return brought the first copies of the Woman and Sunday Hymnals, No. 1. Gospel Hymns and a long series of temperance rallies succeeded, and many hundreds signed the pledge.



10. The subscription mentioned before had been kept up, with some shrinkage, during the time of the building of the church, and up to the time when Dr. H. S. Smith, who had been employed from year to year, became the regular pastor, and was installed, when he informed the people that he would not remain unless they became self-supporting. From the beginning of the church. The pews had been declared free, and any one attending could pay what he chose, and have a pew, or sitting, where he chose. An effort was made to raise the salary by renting the pews, but its failure caused the trustees to soon revert to the original plan of free seats.

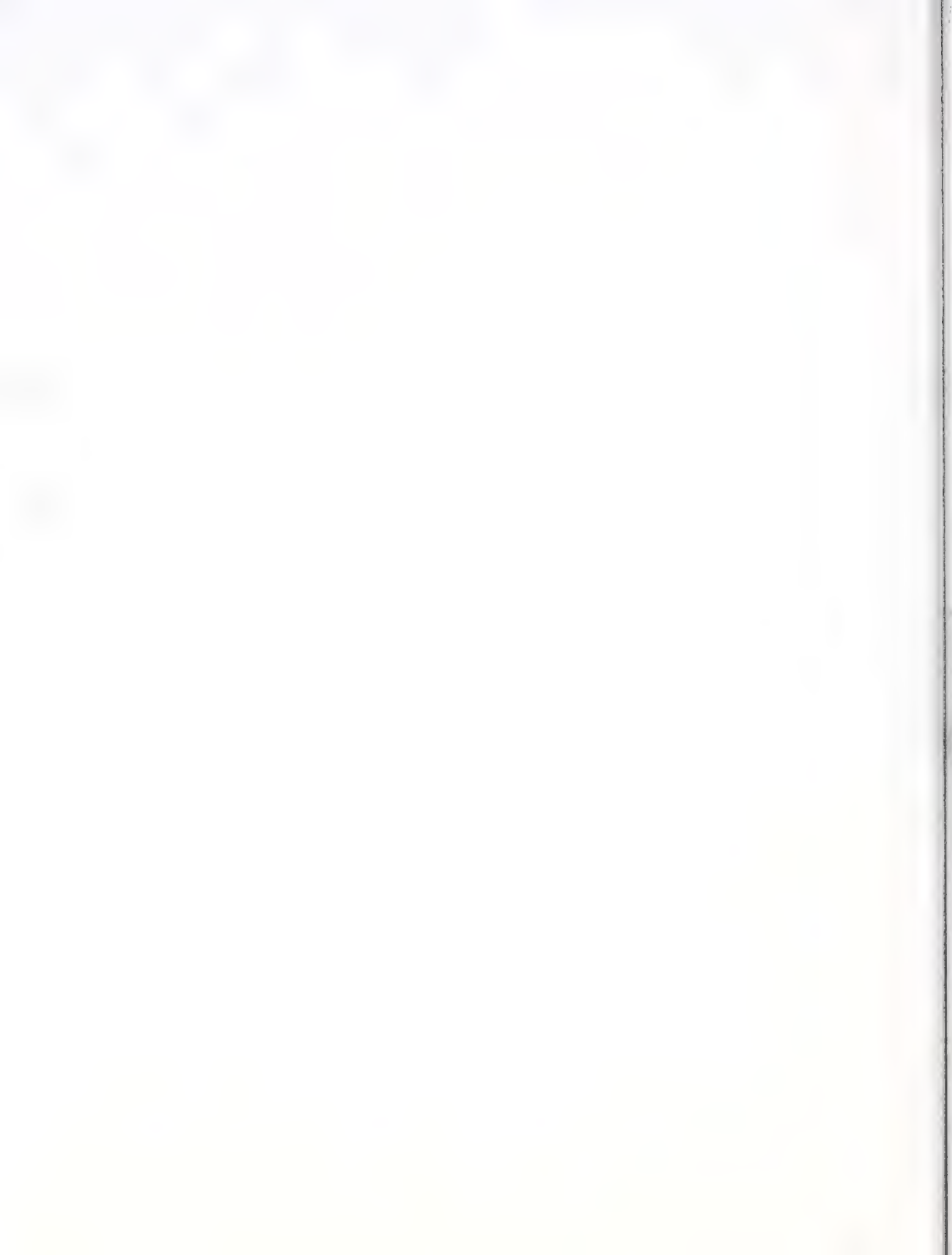
Dr. Smith resigned and left the church in 1873, having been with it in capacity of organizer, stated, supply, and pastor, six years. Following out his wishes the church had become self-supporting, including some voluntary subscriptions from individual members of the first church, and the salary was met in full when he left. During the interval after him, when the Rev. John Woods was stated





11 supply, and the months succeeding, before  
the coming of the Rev. <sup>new Dr.</sup> Harlan G. Mendenhall.  
The finances had begun to drag, and the  
members of the first church, headed by Dr.  
Jesse L. Williams, again came to the rescue.  
There was originated what was known as  
the "Three Years Paper," which provided for  
the salary of the minister for three years,  
leaving the church itself to take care of  
the incidental expenses. There was now  
a membership of two hundred or more, with  
the largest Sabbath school in the city.  
During the second and the third years  
of the Rev. Mendenhall's pastorate, he raised  
sufficient funds to have the auditorium  
freed. He remained pastor of the church  
three years, and was greatly beloved. During  
the three years, one hundred and thirty five  
were added to the church. Failing health,  
however, and other reasons, necessitated his  
resignation, and he left in the fall of 1877.  
The Rev. William B. Minster was extended  
a call February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1878, and began his  
labors March 10<sup>th</sup>. During his pastorate the  
trustees succeeded in carrying along the burden  
of expense, but were gradually running behind.





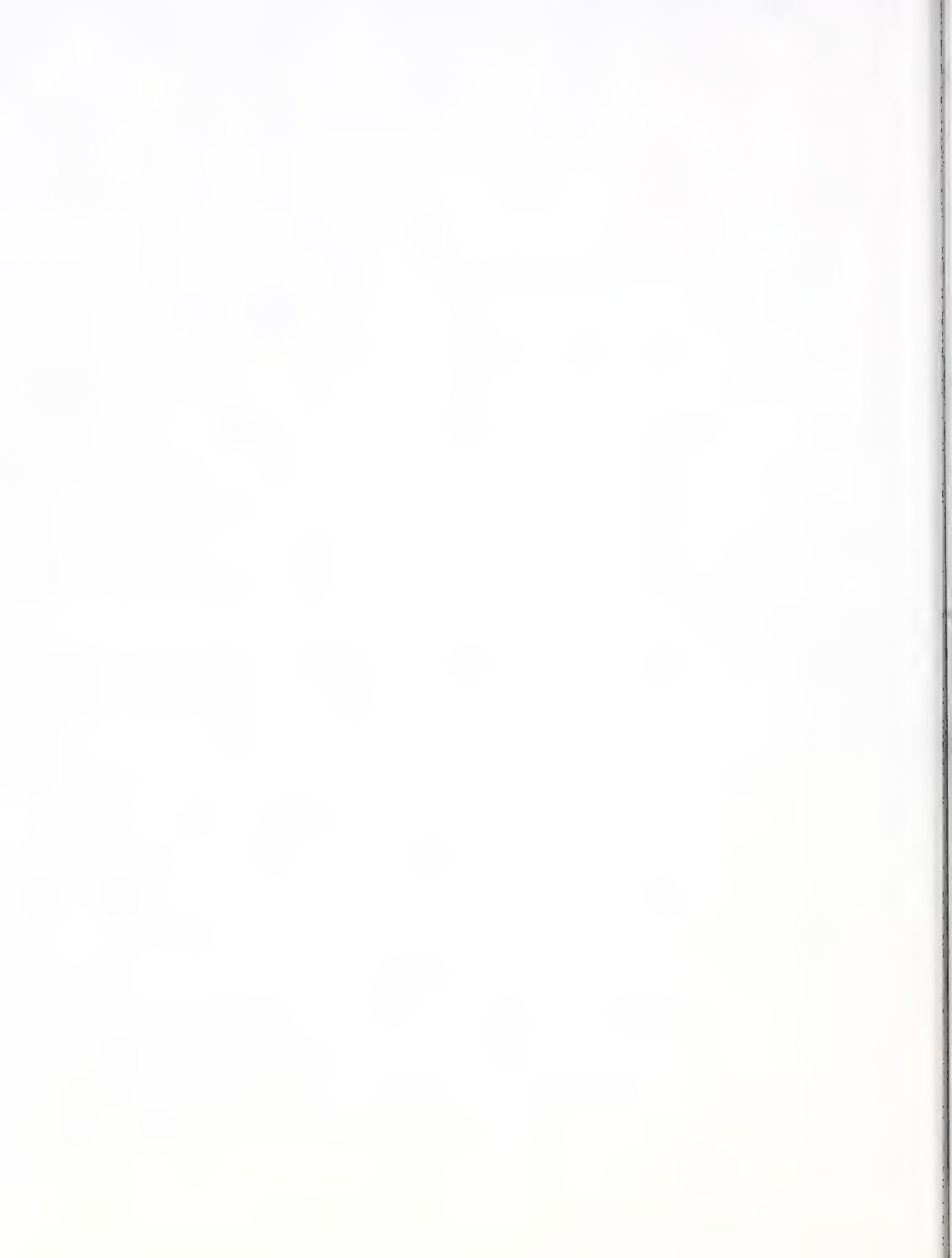
12. The increase in membership was not so large and the pastor laughingly said that he found it necessary to turn the crank the other way, and got rid out many who had been gathered in in more prosperous times. He remained pastor nearly four years, or to the spring of 1881. After him, or in the summer of 1881, came the sad episode in the history of the church, the calling of the Rev., now Dr., J. V. Stockton of Van Wert, Ohio. He was called in June, and began his pastoral work August 1<sup>st</sup> 1881. Everything went on satisfactorily until the new year, when two of his little children were taken down with diphtheria, and died in a few weeks of each other, and he was smitten with the same disease, which left him paralyzed and incapable of resuming his pastoral duties. On April 16<sup>th</sup> 1882, his resignation was accepted, he never having been installed.

In the spring of 1882, the session wrote to Dr. Wilson of the Northwestern Theological Seminary, Altoona, to have a young graduate sent to us, and he sent us the Rev. S. F. Maize, then just graduated. After trial he was, since a call sent, become pastor elect. He was in



13 Stalled. October 8<sup>th</sup> having been previously ordained. His pastorate extended from 1882, to 1885, or there there and four years. It was during this time that a second "Three Years' Paper" was originated. Mr. & Mrs. A. Cressler, having transferred their membership to the First Church, signified their willingness to pledge two hundred dollars a year for three years toward our support, provided we would, from other sources, increase the subscription to two hundred dollars. By systematic canvass, the amount was pledged, and the pastor's salary made certain in this way.

On Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1885, the pulpit again became vacant by the resignation of the Rev. Mark and an interval of two or three months occurred, in which we extended a call to our former pastor, the Rev. Now Dr., Harlan V. Wendenhall, which was declined. We then heard many students from Mc Cormick Seminary, Chicago, and many candidates from various places. David S. Kennedy, <sup>now Dr.</sup> a senior student at Mc Cormick Theological Seminary was sent to us and after hearing



14  
him several times. we decided to extend  
to him a call to become our pastor.  
This being done, and accepted, he continued  
to supply our pulpit, beginning active  
work on the field after his graduation in  
April. He was ordained and installed May  
3d. 1886. Under his vigorous preaching, the  
church, which had been for months without  
regular service, took on new life, and by  
his fine executive ability, was soon placed  
on independent footing. He closed his pas-  
torate November 11<sup>th</sup> 1888, having been with  
us somewhat less than three years. The  
membership of the church was greatly  
increased and strengthened, and he insisted  
on self-supporting measures.

The session after his resignation, desiring  
to secure an acceptable successor speedily,  
decided to avoid, so far as possible, candi-  
dating, and secure a pastor without divid-  
ing the congregation on several. After hear-  
ing several it was decided to invite the  
Rev., now Dr. John M. Boggs, then of Allegheny who  
had been recommended to come for a hearing.





15-  
He was accordingly invited, and preached first December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1888. After a second hearing a congregational meeting was held, and a vote to extend a call to him was given. Owing to our urgent demands, he cancelled other engagements, and came to us speedily, beginning his labors January 6, 1889. Under his pastorate the Eldership was increased to nine, the deacons to six, and in each the rotary system inaugurated. During his pastorate the church became an incorporated body. During the second year of his pastorate the church was re-frescoed and fully repaired. His was the longest pastorate in the history of the church, extending from the first of January 1889 to April 24<sup>th</sup> 1898, or, nearly ten years.

The session dreading the effect of an extended term of candidacy, endeavored to secure an acceptable incumbent at the earliest opportunity; so the clerk was instructed to reply to all applications for a hearing with the information that the church was not yet ready to call a pastor and while



16  
keeping on the alert for the suitable person, gave no encouragement to any.

Dr. J. M. Boggs preached his farewell sermon April 24<sup>th</sup> 1898, and the Rev. J. C. Breckinridge now of Bethany church occupied the pulpit the succeeding Sabbath. After hearing two or three other ministers, all of whom were not candidates, Dr. J. A. P. McGaw was heard, and retained two weeks. There given a unanimous call on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1898, and installed September 6<sup>th</sup> 1898.

The project of selling this present church property, and locating south of the railroad, where three fourths of our congregation reside, had been advocated and contemplated for years, but the difficulty of obtaining a clear title to the property confronted us, and not until Dr. McGaw had been our pastor nearly a year, was it over come, and we free to go on and plan a removal.

A site was decided upon and purchased more than a year ago, but no one appeared to purchase the old property, and it was not until in the winter of the present year

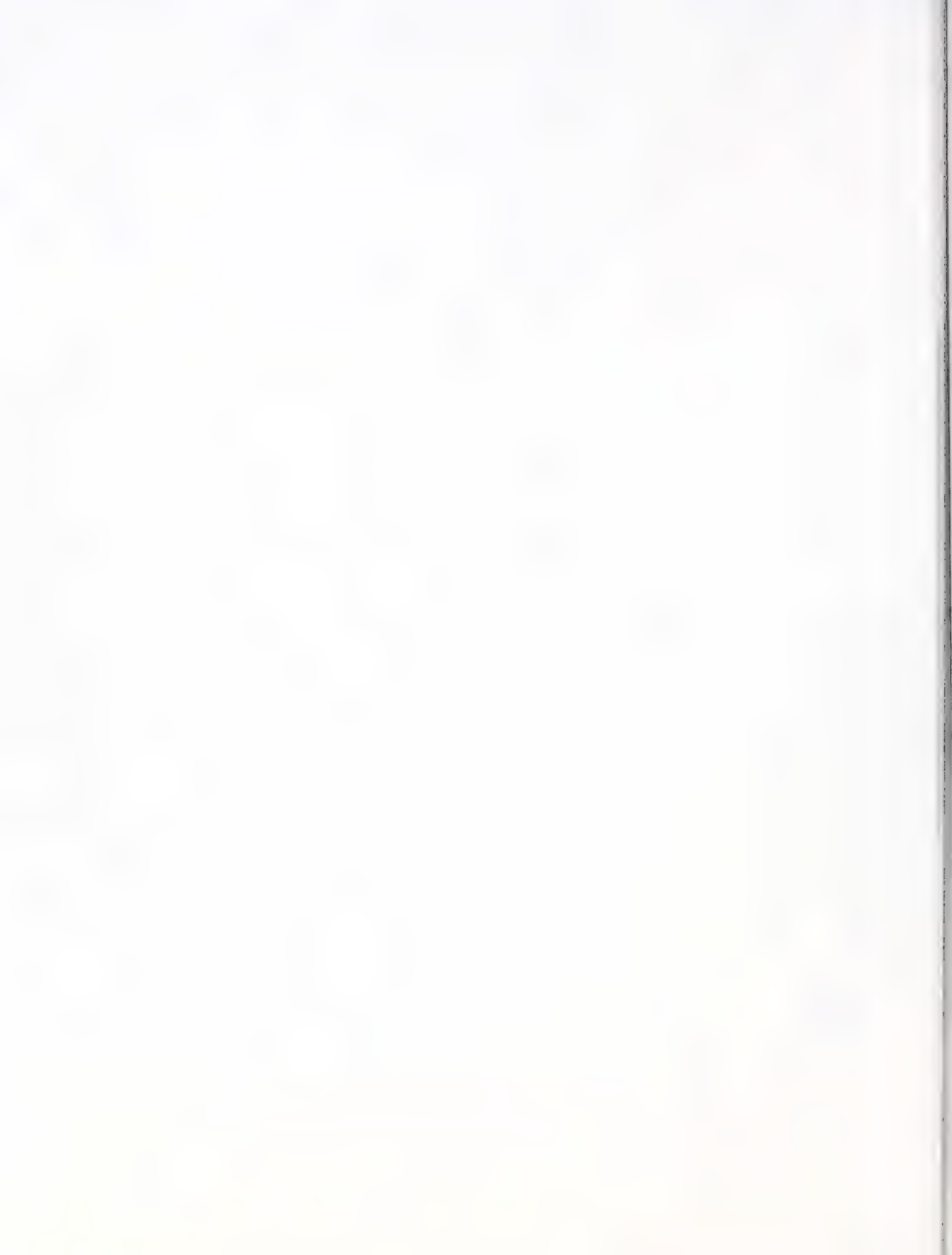


11 That a buyer appeared.

To us who have been on-lookers, the time has seemed long since we decided to remove and build, and we find it hard not to be impatient at the seemingly slow movements of the body empowered with authority to prosecute the work.

To us it seems that the proper way to build a church is to go ahead and build it, not realizing that, at every time there is some obstacle to overcome. It has been the desire of every member of the church in building, not to go into debt, but the greater desire, to become settled in pleasant and handsome quarters, has led us to the determination to order the building committee to proceed, without further delay, to carry out the plans, as prepared by the architects, for the building which will be known as the New Third Presbyterian Church of Fort Wayne Indiana.

There was a time in the dim past, a time which is like a case of milk sickness always over in the south country, a time which



no one now can exactly locate, when we were declared free of debt, but it was such an uncommon feeling, and lasted so short a time that after diligent search its exact location in our Church history is not known. To be under a debt seems to be our normal condition, and we should feel like an invalid who, for a single day feels perfectly well, and should begin dreading that "Something was going to happen, if we were free from debt."

There have been many dark days in our history, many unpleasant circumstances but this is not the time nor the place to notice them. We have been in many emergencies, but we have always emerged. We leave this old building with great regret and our thoughts will often revert with tender feelings to the Old Third Church, and the many happy hours spent there, and it will be long before any other can take its place in our hearts.

Written for the last service held in the old Church  
September 30th, 1900, by Elder J. D. Chambers, Clerk















